Energy For Employment

From the forests of the Pacific Northwest to Louisiana's "Cancer Alley", workers interests and environmental protection have been cynically portrayed as at odds. The truth is that there need be no conflict between labor and environmentalists.

Clean and green technologies offer many new possibilities for job creation and economic growth. Investments in clean energy now will not only help stave off the threat of global warming, they also can employ more people while reinvigorating the economy. Nations around the world are recognizing that environmental protection must be "the central organizing principle" of our future. Those who recognize the opportunities afforded by our environmental needs and invest now will quickly gain the competitive edge in the global marketplace. Japan and Germany already use energy twice as efficiently as the U.S. and are taking over the U.S. lead in renewable energy technologies.

Jump-starting the clean energy economy will require bold action. Greenpeace proposes that at least $15 billion in federal spending be shifted to a crash program of investment in efficiency, renewables, and the millions of new jobs these technologies will create. Furthermore, Greenpeace endorses a superfund to support those workers displaced from dirty technology industries in the inevitable transition to a clean energy economy.

Global Warming

Global warming threatens to throw our economy, our environment, and ultimately the Earth, out of balance. Spurred on by international scientific concern, governments around the world have begun efforts to stabilize or reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases.

The time for action is now. Our fossil fuel habit could quite possibly be committing us to a future of massive and potentially disastrous climate change. According to the Enquete Commission, a prestigious body set up by the German Parliament to investigate climate change, "our planet is already warming at an increasing rate. The first signs of climate change are already measurable and noticeable." (1) The German government has pledged to reduce its emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2) by 25% by the year 2005.

The risks of delayed action are enormous. Climate change will affect every aspect of our lives and our planet. Some of the predicted impacts include:

- increasing frequency and severity of tropical storms like Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki;
- more droughts like those in recent years in California;
- rising sea levels that will destroy beaches, wetlands, and entire island nations;
- disruption of forestry, fishing, and agriculture, leading to famine around the globe;
- widespread extinction of species as they fail to adapt to a rapidly changing climate.

The number one cause of this climate change is greenhouse gases produced by fossil fuels to drive our economy. In the face of such disaster, the only prudent course is to begin the inevitable transition to a clean energy economy now. The Greenpeace proposal, Energy for Employment, is a simple three part program which will:

- improve the energy efficiency of our economy,
- replace the fossil and nuclear fuels that currently power it with renewable energy resources, and
- provide a superfund for workers to help them make the transition to clean energy work.

The United States, the world's largest producer of CO_2, has stubbornly resisted both domestic and international pressure—largely because of a perception that protecting our environment will harm our economy. In fact, environmental protection offers economic opportunity.

Environmental Security

It is critical that the federal government stop many of its practices that now actively hinder clean energy development and instead play a leadership role in encouraging the transition to a clean energy economy. Climate change, bringing environmental and economic disaster, is one of the most significant threats to national security today. Therefore, to put the U.S. firmly on the clean energy path, Greenpeace proposes that $15 billion per year of the defense budget—only about 5% of current military spending—be redirected into a national priority program to create jobs developing clean energy. Of course, this is only the beginning of what can productively be done with defense budget funds. Much more than 5% of the military budget can and should be shifted to meet other urgent environmental and human needs, without reducing national security.

The Energy for Employment proposal recommends dramatically increasing the nation's use of energy efficient and renewable energy technologies. It focuses on improving the ability of the market to bring clean energy to our homes, offices, factories, and vehicles. The proposal calls for renewable production tax credits, low-interest financing, government materials purchases, revenue sharing and incentives to state and local govern-

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ments, utility rate restructuring, accelerated research and development, and a worker transition superfund.

Clean Energy is Ready Today

The technologies we need are proven and ready to provide large quantities of power today. From 1979 to 1986 the U.S. got fifteen times as much new energy from increases in efficiency as from all net increases in supply from nuclear and fossil fuels combined. (2) The wind turbines that are currently operating in California already produce enough electricity to power all the homes in San Francisco. Despite the lack of Federal support, clean energy has flourished in California because the state government was willing to encourage it. A major consortium of utilities in Iowa and Illinois has just signed a contract with U.S. Windpower for 250 mega-watts of clean power.(3) The obstacles to a clean energy economy are clearly political, not technical.

Over a Million Jobs From Clean Energy

Using economic models from the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Energy for Employment study projects that over a million jobs will be created by this intiative. This will replace the jobs previously supported by defense spending many times over and help reverse recent rises in unemployment. These will tend to be safer and healthier jobs that encourage stable economic development in localities in every state.

The transition will be a massive job, but the economic rewards will be as large as the environmental benefits. Every dollar invested in efficiency and renewables creates at least twice as many jobs as the same amount invested in dirty energy.(4)

Millions of jobs are at stake. Many of the investments will dramatically reduce energy bills, saving businesses and consumers billions of dollars. The transition to a clean energy economy would revitalize the U.S. economy, improve our balance of trade, and help us regain a leadership role in the world in advanced technological development.

Superfund for Workers

While there will be many opportunities to directly convert many fossil, nuclear, and defense corporations into clean energy work, the shift will inevitably require a major transition in the structure of the energy industry. A large number of workers will need to shift to new jobs. We must assure that these workers don't get lost in the cracks, regardless of age or position. A superfund would help them with income, tuition, and health care during the transition. We have done it before. The GI Bill helped the returning vets who had risked their lives for their country to make the transition to a peacetime economy. A Superfund for Workers would do the same, helping those who sometimes risked their lives working for society's good in coal mines, nuclear power plants, oil rigs, and other toxic industries make the transition to an environmentally sound and healthy economy.

The World is Waiting

The wide ranging clean energy effort outlined here will be necessary to achieve the carbon dioxide emission reductions that climate scientists say are necessary to stop global warming. Virtually every other industrialized nation has already made a commitment to stabilize or reduce its emissions. It is time for the U.S. to catch up to the rest of the world.

The clean energy improvements would quickly return the investment, saving consumers and businesses billions of dollars directly in lower energy bills, improved health, and reduced environmental damage costs. The environment, the economy, and the unemployed need action now. Each day we wait, we lose.

What You Can Do

Write President Bill Clinton, your congressional representative and senators. Tell them you support the Greenpeace Energy for Employment proposal.

President Bill Clinton
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable_____
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable_____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

To order Greenpeace's full report on this issue, entitled "Energy For Employment" send $5 to: Energy for Employment, Greenpeace, 1436 U St. NW, Washington, DC, 20009. Make checks payable to Greenpeace.

Notes

(1) Enquete Commission of the German Bundestag, "Protecting the Atmosphere. Climate Change—A Threat to Global Development," March 1992.

(2) Amory Lovins and Hunter Lovins, "Drillrigs and Battleships are the Answer - But What was the Question?", Rocky Mountain Institute, Old Snowmass CO., April 16, 1988.

(3) California Energy Commission, US Dept. of Energy, US Windpower.

(4) New York State Energy Plan, Economic Development Staff Report, New York State Energy Office, Albany, May 1989.

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